بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the name of Allāh, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

Topic of Discussion: We Must Always go to the Source and Root (of the Problem)

Lectures on Akhlāq given by His Eminence
Ayatullāh al-ʿUẓmā al-Ḥājj ash-Shaykh Nāṣir Makārim ash-Shīrāzī (may Allāh protect him)

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Introduction

Imām al-Hādī (prayers be upon him) is a great Imām that lived under some of the harshest conditions and opposition (to his leadership) and it was through the use of the military that the Imām (prayers be upon him) was separated from his Shīʿa and it is because of this fact that there are not many aḥādīth narrated from this great Imām (prayers be upon him). One of the crimes that the Banī Umayyah and the Banī ʿAbbas wreaked on the nation was the cutting off of all relations and ties between the people and the A'immah of the Ahl al-Baīt (prayers be upon all of them) such that if this cutting off of relations had not been done, then today we would have countless books containing the words of these great personalities at our disposal.

In the time period between the leadership of Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (prayers be upon him) and Imām Jaʿfar as-Ṣādiq (prayers be upon him) we see what kind of valuable treasures were left behind however after this, meaning during the time of Imām Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (prayers be upon him) the limits were then imposed (on the A'immah (prayers be upon all of them)).

In any case, there are short sayings available from Imām al-Hādī (prayers be upon him) even though the words that have reached us from this personality are quite few in number, however, for this occasion, we will explain one of the short sayings of this Imām (prayers be upon him):

قال الإمام الهادي (عَلَيْهِ السلام): خيرٌ من الخير فاعله و اجمل من الجميل قائله و ارجح من العلم حامله و شرٌّ من الشّر جالبه و احول من الحول راكبه.

> *"Even better than a good act is the person that performs the good act, and more attractive than beautiful (words) is the person who speaks beautiful words, and what is more nobler that knowledge is that person who possess knowledge, and what is even worse than wickedness is the person that commits evil, and what is more of an obstruction than the obstruction (itself) is the person that obstructs (other)."*[1]

In these five statements, the Imām (prayers be upon him) has referred to very important points. What is the meaning of these sentences of which, three of them refer to something good and the other two are in references to something bad? In reality, the Imām (prayers be upon him) is pointing to one fundamental principal which is that we must always go in search of the roots and causes (of anything).

[1] Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 75, Page 370

If we wish to spread goodness and we want the proliferation of good deeds then we must go to its source. If we want to prevent bad deeds from taking form, then we must go the root and source of that which is bad. What is more important than bad and good is the person that performs the act (of goodness or evilness).

An important issue that has always been within the society and still exists is that when people decide to fight against corruption, a majority of the people look at the effects, however they do not go after the causes (that brought that effect into being) and therefore they are not successful. They remove one bad thing however another thing takes it place. They proceed to remove the second thing, however, a third thing takes it place – why is this??

This happens because they have not gone after the root of the problem and the causes for it coming into existence and instead, have gone straight for the effect. Just to present a simple example: Some people may have eruptions (pimples, warts, etc…) on the skin of their face; or on the skin of their body, they find wounds and abrasions. Some people who have these things on their body rush to purchase various types of ointments to remove these eruptions on their face or wounds and abrasions on their body. However there are some people who take the time to investigate to check that this skin - which is nourished (with vitamins and minerals) from within their body - must definitely be facing some difficulty in the way it works and because of these difficulties, the effects which can be seen on the skin and the body of the person are made apparent.

As is commonly held, the skin of the body is like a plain sheet or surface that reflects the actions that a person does. Even though putting ointment on the injury or abrasion may suffice temporarily, however it will not remove the actual cause and thus, once again on another part of the body, these things will return. It is a good thing to use this ointment or cream to have temporary relief from what is troubling the person, however in the mean time, he must go in search of a permanent solution and go after the root of the problem.

Right now, there are two major problems that are evident in our society which are getting worse day by day. The first problem is in relation to the use of cigarettes and the second problem is the open and unrestricted sexual activities taking place.

The age of people who are turning to cigarettes has dropped and even children of a young age are now becoming polluted with this disease (of smoking). According to one of the sources of news in one of the cities that is close to us (close to Qum), there are over 150 women who are addicted to smoking - even though they say that usually, women are less likely to become addicted to smoking. However as can be seen, it is now common amongst women, children, youth and the young adults.

In the face of these dangers, one way to cure it is that we apprehend all of those who are addicted to smoking and those people who are dealing in this contraband are all executed – this is one good way that we can follow which should be done. However, this direction will not solve the principle problem – rather, we must see what the root of this addiction to smoking is.

Is it because people have nothing else to do; is it that they are not religious; is it that they have not been taught the proper culture or is it the work and actions of a hidden hand of foreigners who are saying that if these youth are made to be addicted to smoking then an important source for us to influence this country has been taken care of??

We will never forget the event in history when the British wanted to take over China so much so that they tried to introduce opium into their culture, however the Chinese understood this and stood up in opposition

to the British. The British too, by resorting to their military prowess, brought opium into China and in the books of history this event was recorded as the Opium War. By bringing opium into China, they were able to pollute the people of China and once the younger generation was polluted with this addiction, they (Chinese people) then had no source of opposition to their enemies (the British). From that time, the British launched the War of Opium and thus, they were able to take benefit from another problem that the Chinese then had to face.

When the Americans were dominating over Afghānistān, it was thought that in the face of the slogans that were being raised, that the roots and causes of smoking and drugs would be destroyed completely, however it is stated that the planting and cultivating of opium actually increased and was even greater than before! The Americans declare the slogan of human rights and claim that they are fighting against corruption and drug addiction however they are actually lying! They are in reality only going after what benefits themselves and what is in their own interests even if this means that they must destroy everyone else in the world.

Therefore, we must go after the source of the problem. These youth must be taught properly. One important factor is religion. Without doubt, a religious young man or woman will never become addicted to these things however once he or she has left his religion, then they will definitely fall into addiction.

Another issue is that of being idle and having nothing to do. Once a person becomes idle and lazy, then we see that he will realize that there is good money to be made from this job (of buying and selling opium) and thus, he will go after this kind of work and thus, those people who are idle and lazy will end up being corrupted and (spiritually) polluted.

If we do not sit and think about the plans of our enemy, then how are we going to be able to fight against them? Therefore, we must go after the real causes of the problems and it is not sufficient to simply rely on the effects and go after these. In order to truly understand the causes, we must organize meetings and seminars and arrange programs so that the thinkers of the society can sit down and chart out a course of action. For simple issues and concerns that come up, how many conferences and seminars can we hold - however for such an important task as this – none.

The second problem which is spreading right now is in relation to the open and unrestricted sexual activities taking place which are corrupting the youth. Is it simply enough to place a group of volunteers and army personnel on this and that street corner and other places far and wide to stop the prohibited meeting of young women and men and expect the issue to be resolved with this or must we tackle this problem from another angle?

We must see what the roots of this problem are: one of the roots of this problem is that less and less marriages are taking place. For several reasons, it has gotten harder and harder to get married:

1. Expectations have gotten too high.
2. Formalities have gotten too numerous.
3. The Mahrs (Dowries) have gotten too high.
4. Cost of marriages is too much.

In addition to these, there is also the spread and proliferation of things that are causing the youth to get sexually excited. There are some youth that say that with the present situation and these conditions, it is very difficult to control their sexual desires.

We would say to them that if you wish to watch those bad movies with open eyes, if you wish to watch those particular CDs and read those magazines and then come and say that it is difficult to control yourself, then first off, you must put an end to these things which are sexually arousing you.

When these things that cause a person to become sexually excited are available in an easy way – for example, one CD can contain a whole world full of corruption and vice or the InterNet which has collected waves and waves of corruption and is full of these things that have made the entire world unsafe from the point of view of moral ethics and other issues – then how is it possible for the youth to control themselves?

Sometimes, wedding parties are arranged which are full of things that cause sexual excitement and are full of filthy things which go against the teachings of the religion. Hundreds of youth become spiritually polluted in one such wedding program in which women and men all come together and show themselves off to one another along with dancing and music while a group of young boys and girls who are single are also present in this corrupt gathering and thus, become misled and misguided.

The youth themselves wish to take part in such a gathering and then at the same time cry out that why are we not able to control our sexual desires? The factors that lead to one's sexual excitement must be removed. The factors that can lead to marriage must be made easier. Thus, we must go back to the root of the problem whereas in all of these issues, we are simply going to the effects or outcomes.

گوش اگر گوش تو آنچه البته به جايي   ناله اگر ناله من نرسد فرياد است

However, who is there that will even bother to listen to and hear these words and even more than this, who is there that is willing and ready to speak these words to the people?

...and all praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds, only the mistakes are mine. (Tr.)